The Ministry: A Challenge and an Appeal to Christian Young Men

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REV. WILLIAM HOGE MARQUESS, D. D., LL. D.
LOUISVILLE, KY.

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The call to the ministry, while it comes from God, is mediated through the agencies of His providence and the influence of His Church.

It is the duty of the Church to use all wise and proper means to make this call heard. God answers our prayers for an increased number of pastors and teachers through providential rather than miraculous methods. He enables His Church to show to young men the claims and attractions of the holy office of preacher of the Word. And the church that makes supplication for the gift of ministers must call for volunteers and lift up the gospel ministry as a challenge and an opportunity that bid her sons enlist in its noble work.

Prayer and effort are inseparable. Side by side in the Scriptures lie the commanded petition: "Give us this day our daily bread," and the prescribed rule of action: "Let him labor, working with his hands." In divine harmony we have the command to make intercession for souls, as though prayer alone could avail, and the command to preach, as

though men's salvation hung upon the message that we bear. Where is there an exception to this law under which God links our prayers and our efforts, our appeal to His boundless resources and our use of the resources which He has committed to us? Surely not in connection with that great duty and enterprise of the Church which Paul sketches in brief outline in his charge: "The things which thou has heard of me, the same commit thou to faithful men who shall be able to teach others also." It is the business of the Church to call and raise up and train a godly and efficient ministry through her influence with men as well as through her power with God in prayer. Back of the appeal to young men must be the silent moving force of prayer. Out from the bosom of intercession comes the convincing and compelling presentation of the claims of the ministry.

Prayer does not set aside other methods but uses them and gives them power. Those factors which we commonly class as human means must be present and responsive to the quickening power of God which is sought and secured in prayer.

We do not minimize the value and force of the command, "Pray ye the Lord of the harvest that He will send forth laborers into His harvest," when we join with the use of that great agency the means which our Lord Himself used when He appealed to the judgment and will of His disciples in the call and promise: "Come ye after me, and I will

make you to become fishers of men." There was His clear, pregnant statement of the challenge and opportunity of the Christian ministry as a vocation for vigorous, ambitious, conscientious men. And in home and church and college that voice must be echoed and interpreted till it rouses the slumbering host of His young disciples and awakes to loyal response shrinking Gideons and studious Samuels and devoted Timothys, young leaders of the warfare of the Church of God.

How does the Christian ministry present its claims to the young men of God's kingdom today?

1. As a challenge to their conscience. The supreme call is the clarion voice of Duty, the imperial note of Divine Command. And the critical decision of life lies in the humble, loyal, all-surrendering question: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" No life is rightly launched that does not steer itself from shore to shore by that fundamental principle: "Man's chief end is to glorify God." And the challenge of the gospel ministry comes to Christian youth as the high imperative of duty: "Go, preach the gospel to every creature." The aversion of young men from the ministry has in large part its source and its explanation in their failure to enthrone conscience over all interests and issues, all decisions and pursuits; in their ignorance or neglect of the basic principle of the subordination of life, as a whole and in all its fractional parts, to the will of God; in the

subtle, half-conscious substitution of other considerations as the determining factor in moral choices.

Mr. Eddy, in his tract on "The Supreme Decision," tells of a vessel that was once wrecked off the Irish Coast. The sea was so calm and the night so clear, that an investigation was made to ascertain the cause of so needless a wreck. When at last the compass box was brought up from the wreck and carefully examined, there was found in it the point of a knife blade, broken off by accident and left by some sailor in cleaning the box. That bit of steel had wrecked the vessel, because it had deflected the needle from its path, had made it untrue to the magnetic pole, the centre and rightful lord of its life and movements. Just so, as Mr. Eddy suggests, self-seeking, worldly ambition, love of money or ease or power deflect the decision of our young men in determining their vocation in life. The needle of their will does not settle along the clear line of direction, God's sovereign will for their lives.

Most men understand that they are not to enter the ministry unless convinced that it is God's will. But few perhaps recognize that their choice of any other work should be determined just as clearly and absolutely by that supreme Will, and that they have no right to decide not to enter the ministry except under the guiding and governing hand of God as it leads them in some other direction. For the prime duty, the generic obligation of

every Christian is to glorify God through a life that best commends His truth and grace to men.

In determining upon his life-work, what obligations condition the choice of a Christian young man?

(1.) The fact that he is God's; the fact of his relation to God as His servant, His agent, His property, under His absolute control and for His exclusive use. This is the first and greatest of all the commandments. This vital fact must thrill in our consciousness, until we echo at every turn of life's pathway Paul's recognition of "The God whose I am and whom I serve."

(2.) The fact that God has a plan for our lives, a place for our work, a use for our peculiar talents and influence. Our vocation in life is to be determined in the light of our membership in His Church, our organic relation to the Body of Christ, and our individual connection with that vital organization of the various parts of this body, expressed in the apostolic statement: "Now hath God set the members *each one of them* in the body *as it hath pleased Him.*"

And (3.) The fact that the highest duty of every Christian is to carry out the command of Christ to spread His gospel and to bring to men His salvation. We are in God's world as God's witnesses, a lost world redeemed by the sacrifice of His Son, a world to be reclaimed by the word of reconciliation which He has committed to us. To ignore

this relation to men, to their sin and need and salvation, is to echo the cold-blooded question of Cain: "Am I my brother's keeper?" It is to betray a great and solemn trust imposed on all God's people alike. No Christian has the right to repudiate as without reference to himself that great saying of Paul: "I am a debtor both to the Greeks and the barbarians; both to the wise and the unwise." I am a debtor. I owe the gospel to my fellowmen. And as a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ I must honestly and loyally and thoroughly face and settle the question: How can I best discharge that obligation? In what calling can I most truly pay that debt to my race?

Senator Hill, of Georgia, in an eloquent appeal to the patriotism of American youth, said: "Who saves his country saves all things; and all things living bless him. Who lets his country die lets all things die; and all things, dying, curse him." Is there not a deeper truth in the application of these words to our obligation to the Church? The youth who lets the Kingdom of God die lets all human hope and character and happiness die, robs his race of the chance of redemption, and deserves and earns the curse of the immortal souls to whom he refused to pay the debt which he owed.

The Lord Jesus commanded His Church to make disciples of all nations and to teach them His saving truth. The Church can execute that commission only through the

lips and lives of individual preachers. And she can furnish and send forth these messengers only as each young man in her congregations resolutely and conscientiously seeks to know and do the will of God as to his personal life. The man who has never thought of studying for the ministry has never heeded David's charge to the people of Israel to seek for as well as keep all the commandments of the Lord their God, has never been on his knees with Saul in the earnest desire: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?", has never made his choice of merchandise, or medicine, or law as a decision for God, an act of intelligent, willing obedience to the Divine Call.

There is needed in home and in Church a larger, stronger emphasis on this responsibility of all Christians alike to see that the gospel of God get a full hearing throughout the world, a stronger emphasis on this clear and commanding call to the conscience of His young servants. If such a challenge rang like the blast of a trumpet along the lines of our strong and self-seeking youth, we should hear hundreds who now say lightly: "I could never preach", crying out: "Woe to me if I preach not the gospel! I must do the works of Him that sent me."

So nigh is grandeur to our dust,
So near is God to man,
When Duty whispers low: "Thou must!"
The youth replies; "I can."

2. The work of the ministry makes a stirring appeal to the heroic element in youth. Few things kindle the soul of young men like the call to be a hero. Their adventurous spirits are thrilled by the touch of a magnificent leader, a noble cause, a high-souled enterprise, a challenge to venture all sublimely on some perilous and worthy issue. The fires of patriotism in American youth have been fed through long decades to new brightness and ardor by the memory of the heroic deeds of their ancestors. The cause of liberty has not failed in any age or land to arouse young sluggards to noble action, though its battles seemed hopeless, and its support costly beyond measure. Its needs, perils, hardships, sacrifices constituted its strongest appeal, because youth has the heroic ear attuned to the heroic call. What young Greek counted the hosts of Xerxes or measured the probabilities of success, when Leonidas led to the pass of Thermopylae? Garibaldi struck the true note when he said to the patriot revolutionists of Italy: "I can offer you only rags, hunger, cold, exposure, hardships, defeat and perhaps death; but Italy needs your devotion and your life." And they followed him through death to victory. When the well-born, luxurious sons of the South heard her call in the days of thickening darkness and peril, they sprang into the breach with a courage and self-sacrifice and quenchless ardor that made and make the Lost Cause honored around the world.

Dr. J. B. Shearer, in his fine pamphlet on The Gospel Ministry, in showing how the minister is a captain of the Lord's host, says: "Men admire military prowess; they never tire of doing homage to their heroes * * * There is a spontaneous loyalty in every man's heart when he is brought face to face with the heroism of a Tell, or the maturer military virtues of a Washington or a Lee. It is right that it should be so." In young souls this appeal to the heroic strikes its most vibrant and responsive chord. We need not to persuade them that the ministry will pay or yield a comfortable support, but rather to picture to their minds the dignity and glory of the cause, the greatness of the work, the peril and need of mankind, the eternal issues at stake, the sublime and divine character of the enterprise of redeeming men from sin. And God who made their natures will by His Spirit sanctify this love of the heroic and stir in them a spirit of holy enthusiasm and zeal, of loyalty and noble pride, of daring and princely endeavor. It was not the soldier's beggarly pay that induced our young men in the North and South to volunteer in needless numbers for the relief of oppressed Cuba; it was the appeal of a noble cause. The Japanese troops that swarmed up the breastworks at Port Arthur, even though they knew that their bodies would pile up in defeat and death, knew also that those dead bodies would be the stairway up which Japan would mount to victory and national great-

ness. The Southern physicians who risked and lost their lives in testing the mosquito theory of the yellow fever had this lofty conception of life as a consecration to a great cause; and their heroism is a new call to toil and sacrifice in the noble profession of medicine.

This same high and heroic spirit flamed up in the gifted collegian, who, when told that if he went to savage races as a missionary, his life would be a failure, proudly said: "I am willing to fail for Christ." David Brainerd's devoted life among the Indians, that set in early eclipse, roused the spirit of Henry Martyn; and his untimely death, his apparently useless and hopeless sacrifice, did not dismay or deter the youth of England, but wakened in the most gifted sons of Oxford the high resolve to enter that heroic and unselfish service to God and men. Allan Gardiner, perishing in loneliness and hunger in South America, lighted by his failure, his devotion to the salvation of men even in defeat, a fire of faith and consecration in the twelve men who offered to take his place. See how the appeal of the Young Men's Christian Association for missionary leaders and foreign secretaries is meeting response from the choicest spirits in American and English colleges, because Wishard and Ober and Mott and Speer and Weatherford have struck the heroic chord, have made the Christian movement of evangelizing the nations to stand out as the most knightly and hon-

orable enterprise of the ages, as the most kingly imitation of the spirit and life of Jesus our Captain and Lord. And the work of the humblest pastor in even the narrowest rural field calls for all those elements of devotion to duty, loyalty to a noble cause, courage in enduring hardness, loving and unselfish service to the weak and the needy, forgetfulness of self in the good of others, that constitute the spirit of true heroism.

The man who said: "I am a debtor," said also: "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; unto me is this grace given that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." His work was an enterprise that kindled his ardor, that woke the lofty courage of his adventurous spirit, that stirred the profoundest depths of his passionate nature.

No true minister of Christ ever feels that he is a hero. No genuine hero ever felt himself heroic. But the call of a great cause stirred his soul to become unconsciously a hero, consciously only a lover and champion of right and truth. And undiscovered heroes like Moses and Paul need but the challenge of God's cause and the vision of His campaign to pour out their souls in willing service and sacrifice under the superb and radiant leadership of Jesus Christ.

3. The call of the Christian ministry is a challenge to the youthful love of achievement. The heart of young men is aflame with the aspiration to do. They feel, as James Hamil-

ton has said, in every fibre of their natures the stirring influences of the world in which they live. They hope to be no mean factor in its contests and conquests. Life stretches out before them like a great sea alive with the fleets of exploration and enterprise. And they launch their fresh little barks upon its wide expanse, expecting to reach on the distant horizon some shore of achievement and reward. The pursuit of wealth and fame and success is not always in the minds of youth a base, ignoble passion; it is often the desire to count in the conflicts of life, to conquer its difficulties and make them stepping-stones to great results, to convert opportunity into achievement, to show the resources of their innate and struggling powers, to see the face of the earth and the map of the nations and the realms of life change into new and better forms under their potent touch. This vista, opening before the imagination of a generous Christian youth, may become by divine grace a heavenly vision. And this love of achievement it is the duty of the Church to sanctify and transmute into the fine gold of a holy ambition to be useful in building the Kingdom of God.

When England was in a fever of excitement over the struggle for the emancipation of the slaves in the West Indies, Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton was the leader of the measure in the House of Commons. He had been a self-willed and sluggish boy, until some girl friends stirred his ambition; and he went to

Cambridge and pursued his studies with energy and industry, chiefly that he might carry to them the prizes which he won. But one of them touched a deeper chord in his nature and stirred in him a desire to use his talents for the good of his fellowmen, and interested him in the movement for emancipation. After she was dead, there came the decisive hour, the day when the question was to be pressed to a vote in Parliament. Timid friends besought him not to force the issue, said that he had done his duty in exposing the evil and appealing for relief, and urged him to be content with the promise of the Cabinet that the matter of emancipation would be seriously considered. Beset by friends and menaced by political foes, Sir Thomas swept his glance along the gallery till his eyes rested on the sweet and earnest face of his brave daughter who was praying that God would strengthen his heart and his hand in that critical hour. And then his eyes were lowered to look at the open Bible that lay always on his desk, open at the sentence that had cheered him on in that difficult contest: "Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's." And he called for a division; the measure was passed; and the faith and courage and pure ambition to serve mankind, which one young girl had wakened, had their victory and reward.

Thus must the sluggish, self-indulgent youth of our Church be waked to high and holy

aspiration. The ministry must be pressed on them as a challenge and an opportunity, a challenge because an opportunity to achieve the noblest possible end. Which calls for the greater statesmanship—to smash the trusts at home, or to overthrow oppressive heathenism abroad? To reform and adjust the tariff, or to transform and beautify the moral life of unsaved races? To irrigate the arid lands of the West and reclaim them from drought and waste, or to redeem the slums in our cities and fertilize into new life and moral value a vast people like China? To open for our States new highways of commerce, or to build for lost and unhappy nations a highway into the Kingdom of God?

Those who have heard Rev. Motte Martin's graphic and moving addresses have noted how frequently he refers to himself as "Mpandan-xila." It is the name which the native Africans gave him; and it means Road-maker, the maker of a way into the kingdom of light and salvation. What a conception of the noble work of a minister of Christ! It suggests to us Isaiah's sketch of the servants of the Messiah: "They shall build the old waste places; thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of paths to dwell in." Such men are the true empire-builders. Spurgeon said to his young men: "If God called you to be a minister, I should not like for you to die a millionaire. I should not like, if you were fitted to be a

great missionary, to have you drivel down into a king." One's thoughts leap back to the closing promise of the forty-fifth Psalm: "Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children whom thou mayest make princes in the earth." Princes! Men who lead kingly lives and do kingly work! John Ruskin tells us that the world has had three kinds of kings. Moth kings that lay up treasures for the moth, seekers of ease and comfort; rust kings that have been to their people's strength as rust to armor, consuming them and earning Achilles' indignant epithet for base rulers, "people-eating kings." And robber kings, snatching treasures for the robber, leaving carnage and misery in their train. But "how few kings have ever laid up treasures that need no guarding, treasures of which the more thieves there were, the better! Suppose that there should arise a fourth order of kings who had read in some obscure writing of long ago that there was a treasure which the jewel and gold could not equal! Suppose that kings ever should arise who heard and believed that word, and at last gathered and brought forth treasures of wisdom for their people!" Such is the office of the minister of Christ. It is a throne of power over an empire of human hearts and lives.

The great apostle to the Gentiles expresses this holy desire for noble achievement in the opening passage of his letter to the Romans: "That I might have some fruit among you, as among other Gentiles." And he uses the

very word ambition in a later chapter where he says that he has strived (literally: *been ambitious*) to preach Christ in regions where He had not been named. Every faithful preacher can cherish and realize this overmastering aspiration of Paul for the highest usefulness. Within the confines of an obscure parish, he can save immortal souls, can light the fire of faith and hope in darkened hearts, can sanctify and beautify lives that are wrecked by sin, can make godless homes centres of holiness and life, can reclaim the lost and bring them back to God. He can train children and youth for the highest service to God and men, and can project a movement that shall sweep on and out in widening circles and through eternal ages. As the soul is worth more than body, property or mind, as the making of holy character is an infinitely grander end than the attainment of material or social results, by just so much does the vocation of preacher offer to the youthful love of achievement a more alluring and glorious work than medicine or merchandise, law or teaching. "Young men of hope and promise, find here your highest, holiest ambition!"

The moral mastery of mankind through God's truth and grace, seizing and shaping the population of newly settled portions of our country, grasping and guiding and transforming for Christ the immense stream of immigrants pouring on our shores, healing pagan races at the very fountain-head of their national life and making their civilization pure and happy and

vigorous, fulfilling the words of the prophets, climbing a loftier height of vision and service than theirs, not only prophesying but bringing the day which they foresaw and the kingdom which they heralded—what grander achievement for youthful energy, what purer ambition to fire a heart that loves the Saviour of men! The opportunities of Christian young men in an age like the present are enough to make the blood leap in the veins and to thrill the spirit with the most grateful and exultant joy. Hear the voice of David Livingstone: "I have never ceased to rejoice that God has appointed me to such an office." Hear Stanley Smith, stroke oar of the Cambridge crew: "If I had a thousand lives, I would give them all for China." Hear the message of the noble Cambridge band from Inland China: "Not one of us regrets having come here. Not one of us would retrace a step today. If we had a dozen lives, we should wish that they might all be so invested." There are hundreds, thousands of slumbering young soldiers of Christ who need but the trumpet call of a praying and consecrated Church to rouse them to noble warfare in the service of their king.

At Winona Lake, one summer eve I went with a party of children to see an entertainment of moving pictures. When the title of the series was thrown upon the canvas, it was greeted by the children with instant and rapturous applause. It was the Midnight Ride of Paul Revere. As picture after picture

flashed before us, each scene, each appearance of the white horse and his daring young rider, was hailed with delight. Then followed a realistic view of the battle at the stone fence near Lexington,

"Where once the embattled farmers stood,
And fired the shot heard round the world."

Finally, after a pause that stood for the War of the Revolution, there rose upon our vision a sight that one never sees without a strange stirring of the heart, a sight that all of us, men and women and children, cheered to the echo, a sight that expressed the rich results of that long contest for freedom. It was a most beautiful picture of the Stars and Stripes, the flag of our country, radiant in its glorious beauty and waving happily and victoriously in the free air of heaven. What moved those cheers? What unloosed the voices of those boys and girls? It was not mere admiration for a heroic deed, or ready honor for a lad who did his duty. It was because, unconsciously perhaps, their hearts thrilled in response to the central vital line of Longfellow's poem:

"Through the gloom and the night
The fate of a nation was riding that night."

And instantly I thought how the fate of our nation and of the world is riding in the message and influence of the young minister of God. I thought of the titanic and Satanic forces massing against the souls of men, the dragon and the beast and the false prophet; of the races where sin rules as despot, and

the homes that are in moral slavery, and the hearts that need the touch of Christ to set them free. I thought of the young riders that are already hurrying along the ways of human life and sounding the call to arms for the liberation of the soul; of the sleeping nations of Orient and Occident blind to the mortal peril of their souls; and of the increasing need for heroic young riders, patriots of the Kingdom of God, to give the alarm to their fellowmen. Are there no Paul Reveres to enter these imperilled tracts of human life, no courageous and devoted youth to respond to the call of God: "I have set thee for a watchman; thou shalt hear the word from my mouth and warn them from me?" Has not the hour struck in the history of God's Church when her sons will offer themselves no longer by tens, but by hundreds and by thousands, to bear the lamp of life to the perishing millions of the earth?

O that our young men might climb the mountain heights of present-day opportunity and see with clearing vision and deepening aspiration the onward, upward movement of the Kingdom of Christ! That they might catch and feel the thrilling tones of that voice that is as the music of many waters and that says: "Ye shall be witnesses unto me!" That they might heed His call and follow Him into the holy office of pastor and teacher, which He adorned and ordained, and march into the warfare of His service to the music of that splendid battle-hymn of the modern Church:

Lead on, O King Eternal;
The day of march is come,
Henceforth in fields of conquest
Thy tents shall be our home.
Through days of preparation
Thy grace has made us strong;
And now, O King Eternal,
We lift our battle-song.

Lead on, O King Eternal,
Till sin's fierce war shall cease,
And Holiness shall whisper
The sweet Amen of peace.
For not with swords loud clashing,
Nor roll of stirring drum,
But deeds of love and mercy,
The heavenly kingdom comes.

Lead on, O King Eternal:
We follow, not with fears;
For gladness breaks like morning
Where'er Thy face appears.
Thy cross is lifted o'er us;
We journey in its light:
The crown awaits the conquest;
Lead on, O God of might.